

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claim 1 is considered in the Office action.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith U.S. Patent No. 6,441,920 ("Smith") in view of Tan et al. European Patent Application EP 0 917 044 A2 ("Tan").

Reply to Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Amended claim 1 recites a raster image processing (RIP) software application adapted for use on a networked computer coupled to a plurality of networked printers, the software application adapted to receive a print job, parse the print job into one or more print pieces, load balance the print pieces among the printers based on color use and print speed, and provide a list of all of the printers that received the print pieces. Neither of the cited references describe or suggest such a method.

Instead, Smith describes a system 32 that includes front end computers 40 coupled via computer network 35 to image servers 42, raster image processors ("RIPs") 34, print drives 41 and output devices 46. (FIG. 1; Col. 5, lines 21-23; Col. 5, lines 57-58; Col. 6, lines 10-14). Image server 42 receives and stores images from front end computers 40, and may queue print jobs for immediate transmission to an available RIP 34, or may store images for later processing by RIP 34. (Col. 5, lines 58-61). RIPs 34, which may be software or hardware RIPs, receive PDL files either from front end computers 40 or image servers 42 via network 35. (Col. 5, line 66 through Col. 6, line 12). RIPs 34 provide raster data to output manager (print drive) 41, which either stores the raster data or immediately sends the data to an output device 46. (Col. 6, lines 28-31).

Other than describing a networked printing system, Smith seemingly is irrelevant to the claimed invention. Indeed, as the Office action concedes, unlike the claimed invention, Smith does not describe or suggest a software application adapted to receive a print job, parse the print job into one or more print pieces, load balance the print pieces among a plurality of networked printers based on color use and print speed, or provide a list of the printers that received the print pieces.

Nevertheless, the office action cites Tan as supplying the pieces missing from Smith. Tan, however, also does not describe or suggest the claimed invention, and in fact, expressly teaches away from the claimed invention. Tan describes distributed printing system 100, which includes clients 200, general purpose computer system (server) 400, and output devices 500. (Col. 2, lines 43-47; FIG. 1). Server 400, which includes spooler server 410 and supervisor server 420, organizes documents into print jobs. (Col. 2, lines 57-58; Col. 3, lines 19-22; FIG. 1). A document represents a single user file that is to be printed, whereas a print job represents a collection of one or more documents that are printed as a unit. (Col. 2, line 58 through Col. 3, line 3). To print a document, a client submits a print request to spooler 410, which then schedules the print job on an appropriate physical printer 422. (Col. 3, lines 26-29). Spooler server 410 then forwards the print job to supervisor server 420, which in turn forwards the print job to one of output devices 500. (Col. 3, lines 30-45; Col. 5, lines 30-33).

Tan's system is capable of load balancing multiple print jobs across output devices 500. (Col. 4, lines 18-20). Unlike the claimed invention, Tan does not describe or suggest a software application adapted to receive a print job, parse the print job into one or more print pieces, load balance the print pieces among a plurality of networked printers based on color use and print speed, and provide a list of the printers that received the print pieces.

Further, neither Smith nor Tan include any suggestion to combine the two unrelated references. Moreover, it is unclear how these two references could possibly be combined. Smith describes print systems in which entire print jobs are sent to only one of output devices 46. Tan describes load balancing print jobs between output devices. These two references therefore appear to be mutually exclusive, and strongly militate against any possible combination. Because neither Smith nor Tan, alone or combined, do not describe or suggest the claimed invention, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the § 103(a) rejection of claim 1.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, applicants submit that this application, including amended claim 1, is allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner allow this application.

Respectfully submitted,



James Trosino
Registration No. 39,862
Attorney for Applicants

RECEIVED
CENTRAL FAX CENTER
SEP 22 2003

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
OFFICIAL